What Happened to the Soviet 54th?!?

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A new game variant for **Arctic Storm** with new die-cut counters included with the *C3i* Insert in this issue.

WHEN I FIRST PLAYED *Arctic Storm* as the Soviet player, I attacked the Finnish frontier with the Soviet 54th Rifle Division in the first turn. After rolling the dice and reading the Combat Results Table (CRT), I was surprised by the result. Because the Soviet player is forced to take step loss results from the CRT for the first four turns of the game, the 54th was eliminated. This situation occurred again in several other playings; if the division was not eliminated on turn one, it was by the second turn. This is a problem for two reasons.

First of all, the 54th Rifle Division was a well-equipped and well-trained formation. Unlike most of the Soviet divisions involved in the campaign, the 54th was formed and trained in Northern Russia, near the Finnish border, and was led by a competent commander, Major General Gusevski. The 54th, though it was trapped in *motti* and suffered stiff casualties, survived the war. Through training and leadership, the 54th Rifle Division avoided the fate that befell other Soviet divisions trapped in *motti* north of the severe weather line.

Additionally, in game terms, the 54th is caught in a difficult situation. If the division attacks toward Kuhmo, as it did historically, it stands a high risk of being eliminated in the first two turns. More important, it is the only combat unit in the Soviet "R" Group. Once this division goes, there are no other Soviet units nearby to guard that part of the front or the "R" Group HQ unit! In this situation, the Finnish player usually takes the opportunity of advancing units through the opening and into Soviet territory. If, on the other hand, the 54th just sits and does nothing, there will not be enough pressure applied by the Soviets to tie down Finnish units.

To give the 54th Rifle Division more staying power, my suggestion is to replace the division counter with these regiment counters:

Note:
The difference in combat strengths between the 118th and the other two regiments is arbitrary. This was done so that the totals for the attack and defense factors will equal (after the proper modifiers are applied) those of the divisional counter.

Saarenpaa and the Finnish Big Guns

The island of Koivisto (hex 0618) contained heavy coastal defense fortifications armed with 6, 8, and 10 inch naval guns. This defensive position played an important role in repelling several major Soviet attempts to outflank the Mannerheim Line by crossing the frozen Gulf of Finland during February 1940. For this reason, I include a counter for the coastal artillery garrison stationed there.

Place this counter on hex 0618 when setting-up the Finnish units at the beginning of the game.

Special Rules for the Saarenpaa Garrison

1) Before turn six, the garrison cannot attack any Soviet units unless the Soviets land a unit on Seiskari Island (hex 0518). This is the only hex the garrison can attack for the first five turns.

2) Historically, during the first five turns, the Saarenpaa garrison was heavily engaged with the Soviet Baltic Fleet (and any possible Soviet landings on nearby islands). The garrison could not be distracted by firing on Soviet units on the isthmus. After the Gulf of Finland began to freeze (turn six), the Soviet Baltic Sea Fleet withdrew and the garrison was free to attack other targets. (Remember: Soviet units on hex 0518 cannot attack hex 0618 until turn eleven.)

3) The Saarenpaa garrison can attack all adjacent hexes except hexes 0718 and 0719. The large naval guns were not able to rotate 180 degrees to fire back at the mainland.

4) The garrison does not suffer any retreat/step losses called for by the CRT when it attacks. Remember, the Finns are firing their big guns from fortified bunkers.

5) Starting from turn eleven, the Finnish player can withdraw (remove from the game) the Saarenpaa garrison during the Finnish movement phase and get one replacement point in the following turn. (Historically, the Finns withdrew the garrison in late February 1940, after the Soviets broke through the Mannerheim Line and almost cut off the Finnish unit from the mainland. The garrison was used for extra manpower in defending the isthmus.)

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